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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Housekeepers' Chat — Thursday, November 22, 1928

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Care of the Furnace."

Bulletin Available: "Operating a Home Heating Plant."

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We had the best breakfast this morning -- the kind of a breakfast that makes Uncle Ebenezer cheerful all day. How he does enjoy a meal of Grapefruit; Ham and Eggs; Hot Biscuits, and Crabapple Jelly; and Coffee.

"Hot Biscuits," sighed Uncle Ebenezer happily, when I put the first plate of them on the table, "and Crabapple Jelly! How about another cup of coffee, Aunt Sammy?"

"As many as you want," I said obligingly, "and as many hot biscuits as you want. They aren't very big -- eat all you like."

"Good!" said Uncle Ebenezer. "What are you going to tell your radio friends this morning?"

"My subject is 'The Care of the Furnace." By the way, Uncle Ebenezer, you are the very person to help me with this talk. You know more about furnaces than anyone else in the neighborhood."

"Well," said Uncle Ebenezer, modestly, helping himself to another hot biscuit, "I don't know about that, but I will say that I wrestled long enough with a cantankerous, temperamental furnace to learn something about it. Before I learned how to operate a furnace properly, a considerable portion of my money went up the red brick chimney.

"Most modern homes, like ours, are now equipped with heating plants," continued Uncle Ebenezer. "A large proportion of these furnaces are burning more fuel than they should --- or else they're not heating the house efficiently. There's a lot of good money going up in smoke these days. This may be due to the selection of a heating plant of the wrong design, size, or type-- to faulty installation -- to poor operation -- or to loose-fitting doors or windows.

"The average window has a clearance between sashes and frames of from 1/16 to 1/4 of an inch. That holds for doors, too. Well, this means that about 3,600 cubic feet of air can pass into the average room when the wind's

blowing only 15 miles an hour -- through cracks in the doors and windows. Do you know that it would take 5,300 heat units an hour to warm up this air?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "I never was very good at figures. Isn't there some way that doors and windows can be made air-tight?"

"Yes," said Uncle Ebenezer. "Use storm sashes over the windows. Cover the cracks with felt, wood, or metal stripping. There's a Farmers' Bulletin which tells how to do this, right. It's called OPERATING A HOME HEATING PLANT. Better tell your listeners about it, Aunt Sammy."

I looked up the bulletin this morning, and find that it is a mighty handy one to have around the home, if there's a furnace in the home.

"There's one thing most of us forget," continued Uncle Ebenezer. "That's the moisture content in the air in our homes. Keep that moisture at about the right point, and you won't need so much heat. That saves coal. In most homes, during the heating season, the air is dryer than it should be for the best comfort, and health of people living in the heated houses. In other words, the RELATIVE HUMIDITY is too low. About 25 per cent of the cost of heating is spent in raising the temperature in a house from 60 to 70 degrees, but when the air's correctly moistened, you don't need to have it as warm as 70 degrees. I was reading last night that a certain scientist says the best temperature for physical health lies between 57 and 61 degrees Fahrenheit -- IF THE MOISTURE CONTENT OF THE AIR IS RIGHT."

"I know that the moisture content in the air of a home is important," I said. "And I have an idea that a man must know how to regulate his own heating plant, in order to get the best results. Isn't that true?"

"Absolutely," said Uncle Ebenezer. "If you want to warm a house at low cost, you've got to know how to operate your heater. It isn't enough merely to install a heater -- fill the bins with coal -- and then haul out the ashes. Nor can you expect efficiency from your heater if you let some one who hasn't any interest in heaters -- OR YOUR COAL BILL -- to work out on your furnace. Eliminate the waste. Use every bit of heat locked up in every pound of coal that goes into your furnace. The ash can should contain nothing burnable. It's possible to maintain the right temperature for comfort by burning a certain quantity of coal. To burn MORE than that, is pure waste. The average house-owner burns altogether too much coal."

Before Uncle Ebenezer left, he gave me a number of good pointers on heating, handling fires in the furnace, care of the heating plant, and so on.

"The best results in firing are obtained when you place light material in the fire-bed first," he said. "Then put the heavier wood on that, and finally the coal."

He told me never to let the fire burn hot and cold -- that is, vary from one extreme to the other. The fire should get regular attention throughout the day. Study your fire.

Buy at least 2 kinds of coal at one time. Then study the results you get. Notice if one kind fires quickly and seems to produce an even heat. See which kind burns longest. See how much ash each kind leaves.

A fire shouldn't be shaken down more than 3 times a day. Twice a day is still better. Don't shake too much. Never shake live coals through the grate. And never leave ashes under the grate in the ash pit. Clean them out as soon as you shake them down. It's a good idea to sprinkle them to lay the dust.

Don't disturb the fire with a poker, or by shaking, if it will catch and burn up in time anyhow.

Here's a tip on banking the fire at night, before you go to bed. When the fire is to be closed down for the night -- after you have thrown on fresh coal, or banked it with ashes -- close the check damper and open the draft damper. Give the fire time to stop giving off gases. That is, leave the dampers that way until the fire has stopped giving the gases off. You can judge that by the blue flames sprouting up over the fire bed. Then close the draft damper and open the check and feed-door dampers. You'll have to learn the best way to do these things for your own furnace, and for different kinds of weather.

"Egad!" exclaimed Uncle Ebenezer, suddenly, "would you look what time it is! Here I've been eating and talking for almost an hour! Where's my hat?"

He left in a hurry, and while I washed the dishes I meditated on the value of good food, especially hot biscuits and crabapple jelly.

Now, if you'll get your pencils, and your Radio Records, we'll write a recipe for Two-Crust Pineapple Pie. Don't forget, in writing this recipe, to use a few abbreviations, such as "c" for cup, a big "T" for tablespoon, and a small "t" for teaspoon. Seven ingredients, for Two-Crust Pineapple Pie:

1-1/2 cups, crushed, drained, canned pineapple
1/4 cup sugar
1 cup pineapple juice
1 tablespoon lemon
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons butter, and
1/2 teaspoon salt

Seven ingredients, again: (Repeat)

Heat one-half of the pineapple juice in a double boiler. Mix the cornstarch, sugar, and salt. Add them to the hot juice, stirring until thickened. Mix this with the remaining juice, the butter, the drained pineapple, and the lemon juice. Pour this into a pastry lined tin, moisten the rim, lay

on an upper crust, and press the edges together, to hold in the filling. Cut a slit in the crust to allow the steam to escape. Bake in a moderate oven about 30 to 35 minutes, or until golden brown.

Shall I read the directions again? I believe I will, since they're rather involved: (Repeat directions)

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Tomorrow: "Sunshine and Codliver Oil." Program will include a menu.